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SUBJECT The MX Missile -- Stansfield Turner

BRIAN GUMBEL: Later today, President Reagan gets a report on the state of the controversial MX missile.

This is part of the bipartisan Commission on Strategic Forces. It's expected that that report will recommend the MX be deployed in existing Minuteman silos.

Former CIA Director, Stansfield Turner, joins us now from KPLX-TV, in Phoenix, to talk with us about the future of the MX.

Good morning, Admiral.

ADMIRAL STANSFIELD TURNER: Good morning, Brian.

GUMBEL: Admiral, they're putting the MX in existing silos. Is that going to work?

ADMIRAL TURNER: No, I don't think so. You'll remember that the Congress turned that very same proposal down a year-and-a-half ago. They turned it down because the existing silos are vulnerable. We originally designed the MX to overcome that vulnerability, but we just find that it isn't able to do it. It's such a large missile that we can't hide it, and in today's world the satellite reconnaissance, and so forth, anything that can be seen like that can be easily hit and knocked out.

GUMBEL: You're not a supporter of the MX system. Is

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it the missile itself which gives you a problem, or the manner of deployment?

ADMIRAL TURNER: I think it's the missile itself, Bryan. You see, if we have it and it's vulnerable, we're going to be nervous that it may be knocked out by a first strike in a surprise attack by the Soviets.

On the other hand, it is such a powerful missile that the Soviets see that we're building it as a way of conducting a surprise attack against their missile force. So if we have it, they are going to be nervous. If we're both nervous, we're in what's called "a hair trigger response situation."

The probability of nuclear war by miscalculations, by accidents, increases. I think it's dangerous for both of us.

GUMBEL: Would we have to have a launch on attack strategy for the MX, then, as opposed to a launch on a warning strategy?

ADMIRAL TURNER: Well, that is the only way the MX could possibly be used, in my opinion. I don't the United States will ever initiate an intercontinental nuclear war with the Soviet Union. So, theoretically, if the Soviets start a nuclear war, it would take about 30 minutes for their missiles to knockout the MX. We would have to be prepared to launch the MX in that little 30 minute window.

First of all, I don't think that's practical. I don't think the President could make up his mind and get all the information he needed to make that kind of a momentous decision in 20 or 25 minutes. And, beyond that, I think it's very unwise to put ourselves in a position where we might be forced to launch a missile under such tenuous circumstances.

GUMBEL: Admiral, supposedly today's report will also call for development of a single warhead missile, right now known as the Armadillo. How do you view such a proposal?

ADMIRAL TURNER: Well, now, that is going to be what they call "a mini missile," or "midget missile." It's about one-tenth as large as the MX. Because it's so small, you can move it around. You can put it on trucks, on railroads, on ships, in airplanes and, thus, you can make it less vulnerable -- much less vulnerable than an MX. Therefore, I think it's basically a good concept.

At the same time, we understand the report is going to recommend an entirely new missile -- take about 10 years to do it. But, I think it is unnecessary. We, as taxpayers, are already buying what's known as a D-5 missile for our American

submarines. It's very similar in size and capability to this "mini" or "midget"

GUMBEL: You consider that would be considerable waste, then?

ADMIRAL TURNER: I think it could save us time and money if we just adopted the D-5 missile instead of developing a brand new one.

GUMBEL: Admiral Stansfield Turner, thanks very much for joining us.

ADMIRAL TURNER: Bryan, glad to be with you.